

Mostly about wattles: the publications of Les Pedley

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Les Pedley published approximately 90 scientific papers, flora accounts and extension articles over a 57 year period (1962–2019), with about half published after he retired from paid work at the Queensland Herbarium in 1988. Over half (48 publications) are about various aspects of wattles (*Acacia* Mill. *s.l.*: variously as *Acacia*, *Racosperma* C.Mart., *Senegalia* Raf. or *Vachellia* Wight & Arn.), the remainder being on diverse legume groups (25 publications) or other plant families such as Agavaceae, Asteraceae, Caryophyllaceae, Combretaceae, Ericaceae, Myrtaceae, Pandanaceae, Polygalaceae and Rutaceae. Whilst the majority pertain to Australian groups and species, there are publications that have impacted outside of Australia such as the paper on the recognition of *Racosperma* (Pedley 1986) and accounts of diverse legume genera in *A Revised Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon* and *Flora of China*.

Early in his career at the Queensland Herbarium Les was seconded to the CSIRO on their land survey program and three critical publications on vegetation resulted from this that have remained pertinent for decades afterwards (Gunn *et al.* 1967; Pedley & Isbell 1971; Galloway *et al.* 1974). Otherwise his publications are largely taxonomic accounts of families, genera and species. There is a large number (c. 160) of new taxa (mainly as species, but with also subgenera, series, subspecies and varieties) described, starting in 1964 and continuing to 2019. These were mainly in *Acacia* (or as *Racosperma*), but also in a diverse assemblage of genera from multiple families (*Aphyllodium* (DC.) Gagnep., *Atylosia* Wight & Arn., *Caesalpinia*

L., *Comesperma* Labill., *Dendrolobium* (Wight & Arn.) Benth., *Desmodium* Desv., *Leucopogon* R.Br., *Polycarpaea* Lam., *Sigesbeckia* L., *Terminalia* L. and *Tetramolopium* Nees). A large number of new combinations were also made, mainly pertaining to *Acacia* or *Racosperma*, but also in genera such as *Paraderris* (Miq.) R.Geesink.

Les contributed to a number of flora series, including *Flora of Australia*, *Flora of South-eastern Queensland*, *A Revised Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon* and *The Flora of China*; however, did not contribute introductory text to the large multivolume *Flora of Australia* volumes on *Acacia s.l.* that were published in 2001 during the extended debate on *Acacia* and *Racosperma*. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that a considerable portion of the overall framework for groups in those two volumes owed much to the synthesis on *Acacia* that appeared in the 1986 paper, as well as the landmark account of Queensland Acacias in 1978 and 1979. Despite this, he did contribute a large number of individual species accounts to the two volumes on *Acacia*.

Apart from the formal scientific work published in journals and book series, Les also published a small number of articles that can be categorised as extension (on name usage, brigalow control, or native plant cultivation) and others that were more as commentary on the general debate concerning *Acacia* and *Racosperma*. More whimsical pieces appeared on what camels eat, and on abominable epithets coined by some authors for Queensland species.

Les mainly published as a sole author; although he did co-publish with other colleagues at the Queensland Herbarium (Forster, Reynolds), other co-workers on

Acacia s.l. (Maslin) and diverse legumes from China (Chen, Zhang & Wei), as well as his land system or agricultural research colleagues from the then Queensland Department of Primary Industries and the CSIRO.

With biological taxonomists, the best appraisal of their work is whether the classifications and taxa they propose continue to be recognised into the future. The overwhelming majority of the taxa proposed by Les are still currently recognised; in some cases where they have been reduced to synonymy this was done by himself. Even though the proposal to recognise *Racosperma*, for mainly the species of wattle that occur in Australia, ended up being averted via a highly disputed process (Smith *et al.* 2006), the major groupings of wattles as defined by him are largely supported by more recent studies based on molecular data and analyses (Murphy 2008).

The legumes in particular are an important group of plants in terms of their ecological abundance, often with particular species defining the vegetation communities that they occur in. In this respect, Les was pivotal in coming to terms with the diversity of wattles in a large part of Australia and elsewhere. Species from the mulga complex are widespread over much of inland arid to semi-arid Australia and were of particular interest. While it is a highly variable species complex he did much to resolve this variation into taxonomic entities, naming some widespread species (e.g. *Acacia tephрина* Pedley) considered to possess considerable potential significance in terms of their timber (Lake 2019).

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